

Defense Secretary To Truckmakers: 'You Are Saving Lives'

OSHKOSH, Wis. (AP) — Defense Secretary Robert Gates commended workers at Oshkosh Corp. ([NYSE:OSK](#) [1]), telling them Thursday that the military trucks they produce that are being used in Afghanistan are saving soldiers' lives.

The newest trucks, designed to be agile enough to maneuver through the nation's rugged terrain yet strong enough to withstand the blasts of roadside bombs, began landing in Afghanistan last month. They're part of a class called MRAPs, or mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles. Because they can handle all kinds of terrain, they're called M-ATVs.

Although troops are only now beginning to use M-ATVs, the safety of MRAPs in general has drawn the gratitude of countless military members and their families, Gates told hundreds of Oshkosh employees.

"Our troops love them, and commanders sleep better knowing the troops have them," he said during a visit to the company.

When the Defense Department solicited bids for M-ATVs, the Oshkosh, Wis.-based company beat out three other competitors. Its contract calls for more than 6,200 vehicles in deals topping \$3.2 billion.

"With every vehicle you complete, you are saving American lives," Gates told the workers, many of whom nodded in response.

The hefty military deals have revived Oshkosh's stock price and created hundreds of jobs. Shares that languished around \$5 in the spring closed Thursday near \$40. The company, which has about 12,000 employees worldwide, hired more than 650 workers at its two Oshkosh plants and called back more than 725 workers who had been laid off from JLG Industries Inc., a subsidiary based in McConnellsburg, Pa.

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